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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1691-4320> (2020) The Dark Gate: An Autoethographic Composition in Response to the Poetry of David Vogel. [Composition] (Unpublished)

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# The Dark Gate: An Autoethnographic Composition in Response to the Poetry of David Vogel

UoA 33 Single-Component Output with  
contextual information

David Lancaster

2017



Fig. 1 David Vogel

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# The Dark Gate – 300 word statement

Situated in my autoethnographic research as composer, this work seeks to explore and develop a response to the events of the Holocaust through a setting of words by David Vogel. In composing *The Dark Gate*, I was attempting to understand more deeply a relationship with the past, and in this case with traumatic events which were not experienced first-hand but which impact profoundly upon cultural memory, though a re-telling of the narrative in such a way as it reflects my own experiences (I translated Vogel's poetry into English and visited Auschwitz to find his name in the register of those killed). As Chang (2008, 49–50) says, "autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding of others (culture/society) through self".

Vogel's text provides an authentic vehicle for an explorative re-telling and a framework for the five songs; although his poems

are ordered in such a way as to create a narrative which traces a path leading from notions of 'home' towards the events of the Holocaust, the musical trajectory of the songs is not directly linear; material from the opening song (the repeating high F, for example), recurs independent of the poetic structure, and there are other recurring themes and devices spanning the work to create meaning within a highly contrasted musical landscape, in effect creating a multi-layered montage. Eisenstein, who developed this cinematic technique wrote that 'the future of montage lies in musical composition'; in this work I attempt to re-present narratives and interlinked themes through the juxtaposition and superimposition of musical fragments. In this instance, the softer transitions (in which there is shared material either side of the 'cut') better satisfied the musical context, although in subsequent work I have been able to develop this technique using much harder, clearer edits.

# Research Objectives

Research objective	Evidence
To develop an autoethographic response to events of the Holocaust, mediated by the text of David Vogel.	Score, recording.
To explore notions of re-telling: finding new ways to re-present existing narratives.	Score, recording.
To investigation how cinematic editing techniques might be applied to musical composition.	Score, recording.

# Process and dissemination

Composed: Spring 2017

Scored for soprano voice and piano

Duration: 12 minutes, approximately.

Performance: The Dark Gate was first performed by Peyee Chen and Kate Ledger (Late Music, York, 5<sup>th</sup> August 2017) and by Jessica Summers and Jelena Makarova (Ripon Cathedral, performance postponed due to coronavirus pandemic). The recording of the premiere is available online. David Lancaster presented a talk preceding the premiere performance, and included The Dark Gate in a composer lecture at York St John University on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

Publication: The Dark Gate (score) was published by University of York Music Press in January 2019.

1  
On summer evenings  
the blue mists rise  
From streams, and hang trembling  
Among evening whispers.

At the edges of forests  
Young girls sit alone  
Their hair hanging loose  
Weeping tears over nothing

2  
How can I see you love  
Standing alone  
Amid storms of grief  
Without feeling my heart shake (tremble)

A deep night  
Blackier than the blackness of your eyes  
Has fallen silently  
On the world

And is touching your hair.

Come,  
My hand will clasp your dreaming  
Hand  
And I shall lead you between the nights,  
Through the pale mists of childhood.

3  
An autumn day will breathe.  
With a pale, trembling hand  
It will slowly strip the black dress  
From your sleeping village.

In front of your white house  
The naked linden will stand  
Sadly swaying.

I shall return, lonely.  
Out of the night  
Bow gently to her and say:  
*Take my greeting to your mistress.*

But you  
Will go on softly sleeping on your bed.

4  
With gentle fingers  
The rain is softly  
Playing sad melodies  
On the black instrument of night.

Now we are sitting in darkness,  
Each in their own house  
Listening to the rain  
Telling our sorrow.

For we have no more words.  
Our feet have been leadened  
By day.  
There is no dance  
Left in them.

5  
There is one last solitary coach about to leave.  
Let us get in and go,  
For it won't wait.

I have seen young girls going softly  
With sad faces  
That look ashamed and sorry  
Like purple sunsets.

And chubby pink children  
Who went simply  
Because they were called.

And I've seen men  
Who stepped proud and straight through the  
streets of the world,  
Far and wide,  
They too got in calmly  
And left.

And we are the last.  
Day is declining.  
The last, solitary coach is about to leave.  
Let us too get in quietly  
And go,  
For it won't wait.

# Concert performance and programme notes

## The Dark Gate (2017, World Premier)

This music sets five poems by David Vogel (1891-1944) which are sung without a break:

1. On Summer Evenings
2. How Can I See You Love
3. An Autumn Day will Breathe
4. With Gentle Fingers
5. There is One Last Solitary Coach about to Leave

In his work and life Vogel was always an outsider. In Vienna (during WWI) he was imprisoned as a Russian subject; he subsequently adopted Austrian nationality then emigrated to Palestine before returning to settle in Paris. At the outbreak of WWII Vogel was arrested in France as an Austrian subject; on the Nazi invasion of France he was released and then re-arrested as a Jew before being transported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered in 1944.



**Living Music, Live**  
Unitarian Chapel, St Saviourgate  
York YO1 8NQ  
Programme £1



**Peyee Chen (soprano) & Kate Ledger  
piano)**  
**York Unitarian Chapel,  
Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2017 at 7.30pm**



**Sponsors:** John S. Cohen Foundation, Holst Foundation, RVW Trust, Sylvia and Colin Shepherd Charitable Trust, Galscott Foundation, Hinrichsen Foundation, The Radcliffe Trust, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, York Common Good Trust, York St John University, YorkMix and Wisteria Music Books. Registered Charity 1068924 (Soundpool)

[www.latemusic.org/concerts](http://www.latemusic.org/concerts)  
Registered Charity 1068924 (Soundpool)

# Score and Recording

Link to recording

[https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlqMggwUEbS9mFmtacwd8I\\_hGm8G?e=6wpk6u](https://1drv.ms/u/s!AlqMggwUEbS9mFmtacwd8I_hGm8G?e=6wpk6u)

Link to score

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!AlqMggwUEbS9mFalA--2UHLfCLLC?e=PIYYri>

**The Dark Gate**  
On Summer Evenings

David Vogel (1891-1944?) David Lancaster

*Adagio*  $\text{♩} = 60$  *p* languid, distant

On sum - mer eve - nings the blue mists rise

*Adagio*  $\text{♩} = 60$

from streams and hang trem - bling a - mong eve - ning whis - pers.

At the ed - ges of for - ests young girls sit a -

*p*



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